

Reverberations of Dallas

FINAL DISCLOSURE

The Full Truth About the Assassination of President Kennedy.
By David W. Belin.
Illustrated. 249 pp. New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons. \$19.95.

MAFIA KINGFISH

Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy.
By John H. Davis.
Illustrated. 580 pp. New York:
McGraw-Hill Publishing Company. \$19.95.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE ASSASSINS

My Investigation and Prosecution of the Murder of President Kennedy.
By Jim Garrison.
Illustrated. 342 pp. New York:
Sheridan Square Press. \$19.95.

By Ronnie Dugger

THE murder of John F. Kennedy in 1963 still is not solved to the satisfaction of public opinion or interested specialists. Was it Lee Harvey Oswald acting alone? In league with Castro? Was it anti-Castro Cubans? Russians? the C.I.A.? the F.B.I.? the Mafia? Were there other gunmen? Was Oswald framed, a patsy for one or more of these groups? A quarter of a century later, three books give us a cross section of the complexity, passion, ferocity and gravity of this relentless national mystery.

His "Final Disclosure," huffs David W. Belin, is the full truth, and that truth, he puffs, is "incontrovertible": "there can be no reasonable doubt" that Oswald, "the only gunman," was the killer and "no doubt" that if tried he would have been convicted. Mr. Belin, one of the two lawyers on the Warren Commission staff who concentrated on who killed Kennedy and J. D. Tippit (a Dallas police officer who was shot to death elsewhere in the city an hour after Kennedy), reviews the copious and weighty circumstantial evidence against Oswald. "I had more firsthand, direct contact with the key witnesses to these two murders and with the physical evidence than anyone else in the world," Mr. Belin writes. "Fifty years hence, historians will agree the Warren Commission was right."

Mr. Belin ignores numerous substantial controversies about the facts and provides no specific source notes for what he writes. In effect, therefore, he invites his readers into his pirogue for a tour of the swamp of the assassination, blindfolds them, paddles them where he wants to go and tells them what he is seeing for them.

He condemns "assassination sensationalists," "the assassination scam," "the continuing deception of the American people about what took place"; and he criti-

cizes eight authors of other books on the assassination for having failed to mention testimony he regards as conclusive or for other alleged offenses. Indubitably, a great deal of paranoid and otherwise irresponsible misinformation about the Kennedy assassination has traveled far and sold well, but some of Mr. Belin's assaults on the critics are as tendentious as some of theirs on the Warren Report.

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The former Warren Commission lawyer declines to rule out one of the conspiracy theories. He grants that Oswald might have been influenced by Fidel Castro's knowledge that Mr. Castro was the target of the joint

Ronnie Dugger, who covered the assassination of John F. Kennedy for The Washington Post and The Texas Observer, is the author of "On Reagan: The Man and His Presidency."

Central Intelligence Agency-Mafia enterprise to murder him. "One must add the possibility," Mr. Belin writes, "that while in Mexico City, Oswald had a conversation with a Castro agent or sympathizer about getting back at Kennedy and was promised financial and other support if he ever was able to succeed." Whether that happened or not, Mr. Belin believes that Oswald "felt he was acting on behalf of" Mr. Castro.

John H. Davis, author of books on the Kennedys, the Bouviers and the Guggenheims, argues in "Mafia Kingfish" that Carlos Marcello, the alleged Mafia boss in New Orleans, who is now in a Federal prison, arranged Kennedy's murder to stop Attorney General Robert Kennedy's attempts to deport Mr. Marcello. Mr. Davis has brought together many data bearing on this thesis, including Oswald's purported connections, through his uncle and mother, with the Marcello organization and Jack Ruby's purported ties to the Mob.

Mr. Davis suggests that Mr. Marcello used Oswald as a handy scapegoat, was his "employer" in the assassination and might also have had a Mafia hit team sent to Dallas's Dealey Plaza from some other part of the

country. Immediately after the murder, Mr. Davis contends, Mr. Marcello sent David Ferrie, a private investigator who did work for Mr. Marcello, to Texas to order Ruby to kill Oswald. J. Edgar Hoover covered up the conspiracy, the author alleges, to protect his own and the F.B.I.'s reputation, which Hoover had staked on the sole-assassin theory. Robert Kennedy kept quiet about it, if one follows Mr. Davis, because Mr. Hoover had proof of the Kennedys' involvement in the C.I.A.-Mafia plot to kill Mr. Castro and of President Kennedy's dalliances with a Mafia moll and with Marilyn Monroe, as well as Robert Kennedy's liaison with Monroe; and that Mr. Marcello may have been behind the killings of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, too.

One can learn little from Mr. Davis about the quality of his evidence — despite an impressive bibliography, he,

like Mr. Belin, provides no specific reference notes. Worse yet, the reader, following Mr. Davis down his twisting trail, is led this way and that by such phrases as "not unreasonable to assume," "reasonable to suspect," "one wonders whether," "could it have been" and "it does not seem unreasonable to conjecture."

When Jim Garrison, the author of "On the Trail of the Assassins," was the District Attorney in New Orleans, he accused the C.I.A. of involvement in killing John Kennedy and prepared criminal cases in the murder against David Ferrie and another citizen of New Orleans. Mr. Garrison minimizes Ferrie's connections with Mr. Marcello and emphasizes his supposed links to the C.I.A. Ferrie died under strange circumstances; Mr. Garrison then brought to trial his second suspect, who was acquitted. John H. Davis, in his book, repeats accusations that Mr. Garrison accepted large

financial favors from allies of Carlos Marcello, was friendly with three of Mr. Marcello's brothers and was soft in prosecuting Mr. Marcello's men. For his own part, Mr. Davis labels Mr. Garrison's assassination inquiry "a monumental fraud" during which the District Attorney "pointedly steered . . . away from allegations of Mafia involvement."

Mr. Garrison argues in his book that the Mob is the "number one" false suspect in the assassination. He tells us that he cleaned up rackets and clip joints in New Orleans, denies an allegation that he received a gambling credit from an ally of Mr. Marcello's and asserts that he does not know Mr. Marcello and never came "upon any evidence that he was the Mafia kingpin the Justice Department says he is."

Alone among these authors, Mr. Garrison provides specific source notes, although some of them cite the oft-questioned work of Mark Lane, which Mr. Garrison admires, and other notes allude to records and documents Mr. Garrison says were stolen by a named C.I.A. person who infiltrated his inquiry.

Mr. Garrison reviews many challenges to the evi-

dence against Oswald; for example, the absence of any record of the suspect's 12-hour interrogation or of any physical signs on his skin that he had fired a rifle on the fatal day, and the mysterious disappearance of the President's blasted brain. Mr. Belin might be right in believing that Oswald would have been convicted, but it would have been the trial of the century.

Mr. Garrison also offers his "informed historical speculation" that Oswald was a United States agent in the Soviet Union and an F.B.I. informant in the United States who shot neither the President nor Tippit, but was manipulated and framed in these murders. Acting in concert with others, Mr. Garrison writes, "rogue elements" of the C.I.A., motivated by disgust with Kennedy's withholding of air cover during the Bay of Pigs invasion and his reported decision to withdraw troops from Vietnam, executed Kennedy in a coup d'état. Then, Mr. Garrison continues, the F.B.I., the Dallas police homicide unit that handled the case, the Secret Service and the military participated in the subsequent cover-up, and agencies of the Federal Government, wanting to silence and to punish Mr. Garrison, twice tried to frame him in trials for bribery and income tax evasion, at both of which he was acquitted.

As these merely representative books show, unless Dallas County itself reopens the matter, American history will continue to be infested with rancorous disputes about the assassination of President Kennedy. A certain Dallas prosecutor of my acquaintance used to speak of his need, when he was laboring to imprison some punk, for "the greasy thumbprint." That's what we still need as we enter the 26th year since those days in Dallas. □



Dallas crowds greeting President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy at the airport on the morning of Nov. 22, 1963.